DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 455 453 CE 082 146

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TITLE	Adult Education at the Crossroads: Learning Our Way Out. Global Perspectives on Adult Education and Training.
ISBN	ISBN-1-85649-750-X
PUB DATE	2001-03-00
NOTE	207p.; Produced by Zed Books, Ltd.
AVAILABLE FROM	Palgrave, an imprint of St. Martin's Press, Scholarly and Reference Division, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010 (hardback: ISBN-1-85649-750-X, $69.50; paperback: ISBN-1-85649-751-8, $25). Tel: 800-221-7945, ext. 270 (Toll Free); Fax: 212-777-6359; Web site: http://www.palgrave-usa.com/.
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Information Analyses (070) -- Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Activism; Adult Basic Education; *Adult Education; Change Agents; Developed Nations; Developing Nations; Economic Development; Educational Environment; *Educational History; Educational Needs; *Educational Philosophy; *Educational Practices; *Experiential Learning; Foreign Countries; Futures (of Society); Humanism; Marxism; Postsecondary Education; *Social Change; Socioeconomic Influences
IDENTIFIERS	Brookfield (Stephen); Dewey (John); Freire (Paulo); *Illich (Ivan); Knowles (Malcolm S); Lindeman (Eduard); Marx (Karl); Rogers (Carl); UNESCO

ABSTRACT

This book assesses the current state of adult education, including the traditions out of which adult education comes, its current problems, and its possible futures. It begins with an overview of Ivan Illich's theory and explains its significance for adult education. Part 1 examines the main historical traditions in adult education, including the education and development fostered by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization); the theories of pragmatism (Dewey, Lindeman, experiential learning, symbolic interactionism), humanism (Rogers, Knowles, Brookfield) and Marxism (Freire, participatory action research) and the role of adult education in modern industrial development. Part 2 looks at more recent trends, including "turbo" capitalism, erosion of the welfare state, postmodernism, and the ecological crisis. Next the authors discuss privatization of adult education (customized learning for individuals) and instrumentalism (learning for earning). In Part 3, the authors maintain that adult education's longstanding commitment to deliver social change ran into difficulties in the 1980s and 1990s. After a chapter on how adult educators can "learn their way out" of the negative influences of recent trends, the book concludes by identifying possible future scenarios; the challenges confronting adult educators still committed to social change; and features that can contribute to "learning our way out of" the current impasse in adult education. (Contains 465 references.) (KC)